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PROGRAMME AND BUDGET

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY FOR THE SECRETARIAT

STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR THE SECRETARIAT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND PROGRAMME PROPOSALS

Note by the secretariat

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I. THE CONTEXT FOR ACTION BY THE SECRETARIAT

1. The worldwide efforts to combat and reverse the processes of desertification and tackle drought in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid lands have substantial implications because of the geographical scope of these processes, the number of countries affected and the population groups who are the victims. They therefore stand at the heart of the strategies pursued by the international community to combat poverty, create propitious conditions for sustainable development and save the biosphere from the threats it faces. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the effects of drought, which has now been ratified by the majority of United Nations member countries, bears witness to the universal resolve to translate into new strategies, institutional arrangements and appropriate machinery for concerted action and cooperation the determination of the signatories to respond to this challenge.

2. The Convention joins other international legal instruments which strive to remedy the hurt sustained by the planet. But it is also, in keeping with the wishes of its promoters, an innovative instrument in that it has set itself the goal of relocating a clearly circumscribed problem - that of the "rational use" of natural resources in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas - in the context of sustainable development in the affected regions. When it was being drawn up, it was clear that efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought could not be reduced to technical and regulatory solutions: they could have a chance of success only by becoming an integral part of the multidimensional effort to improve the quality of life of the users of natural resources under threat of degradation. Hence this resolve to found the provisions for combating desertification and the effects of drought on multiple synergies and on the coordinated commitment of all the partners involved in this effort. Thanks to the Convention, the effort to combat desertification and the effects of drought has become an essential dimension of development programmes. While it has no independent funding, machinery has been set up to respond, as a part of global coordination of such programmes, to the specific requirements of the actions associated with its implementation.

3. Putting such an approach into practice implies that the actors and partners involved should form an effective coalition to apply the provisions of the Convention through all the development programmes in the affected regions. It also implies that the parties to the Convention should act as guarantors of the Convention to ensure consistency among the actions embarked on, to evaluate their effects on the processes of desertification and to respond continuously to warning signals.

4. The interim secretariat has completed its work in discharging the role assigned to it to help in preparing for the application of the Convention and prompting States to ratify it. Now that the implementation of the Convention is beginning, it would seem that the role of the permanent secretariat should be, in the spirit of the instruments, to promote, under the leadership of the parties to the Convention, the formation, through action, of this coalition of actors and partners. In this way it will be called upon essentially to serve the parties by helping them to apply the provisions and strategies of the

Convention, while respecting, inter alia, the long-term objectives set out in Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, from which the idea of the Convention originated.

II. STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR THE SECRETARIAT (1999-2000)

A. Mission statement

5. The Convention to Combat Desertification and the effects of drought entered into force on 26 December 1996. Through it, the signatory countries endorsed for the first time a concept of international law which extends well beyond the specialized topics which are generally the subject of such conventions. These countries, recognizing the global nature of the problem of desertification and the effects of drought as well as its social, economic and political implications, enacted legal provisions which refer expressly to worldwide obligations relating to development and integrated action in the field of natural resources. The topic of desertification is thus no longer a specific environmental problem, but forms a kind of conceptual and institutional framework which can help countries to act in a more structured and more consistent way in the various fields which influence the solution of the problem addressed by the Convention.

6. In this respect, the Convention makes a substantial addition to all the measures, programmes and resolutions which, since the first conference on desertification in Nairobi in 1977, have sought, with uneven or inadequate results, to address the challenges posed by this very grave threat. The Convention contains many provisions which refer to integrated approaches, methodologies, specific and global measures which will make it possible to tackle desertification effectively and enhance efforts to combat the effects of drought. However, the Convention has yet to find a true identity, understood as the way in which it will be perceived by the actors concerned as an effective instrument for combating desertification and the effects of drought. It can hope to reach this goal only gradually, essentially by means of practical action linked with a substantial capacity for adaptation, and provided that the international community provides effective support, to which the secretariat must contribute.

7. Indeed, the secretariat constitutes a key element of the machinery established by the Convention. For the parties to the Convention, the application of the Convention is only one of the many problems which they have to address, and it seems clear that without the ongoing support of a body for which it is the main activity, they find it difficult to take all the provisions of the Convention into consideration and to make the most of the comparative advantages they contribute. It is equally difficult for them to guarantee consistency with all their other programmes and ensure sustainable mobilization of the actors concerned in tackling the challenge of desertification and the effects of drought. In this context the secretariat is expected to perform a support function. As the parties meet to take stock of the initial steps taken to put the Convention into effect, it is vital to put before them proposals concerning what the role of the secretariat might be, under their guidance, and what might be the strategic principles underpinning its activities in the medium term.

8. The mandate which the secretariat has been given does not make it an operational body, but assigns it essentially a servicing function vis-à-vis the parties to the Convention. However, such a function can only be discharged realistically by taking into consideration the actual resources available to the secretariat in responding to demand for services. Account should also be taken of the perception of the needs of the parties, which recent experience has highlighted.

9. Three idées-force have emerged in characterizing a desirable strategy around which the various spheres of activity of a medium-term action programme might be structured. These ideas are those of "reference", "advocacy" and "synergy". In keeping with these ideas, the secretariat would plan to:

(a) Become a source of **reference** and scientific and technical analysis for the parties to the Convention;

(b) Put itself forward as an **advocate** of awareness creation among actors and public opinion concerning the challenges presented by the need to combat desertification and the effects of drought in the context of sustainable development;

(c) Serve as a driving force for the creation of **synergies** in the context of cooperation at the global, regional and national levels for the implementation of the Convention.

10. Such idées-force constitute, in a way, criteria which will enable the secretariat to evaluate the implementation of its programme of action. On this basis the reality and the impact of the services it has provided to the parties to the Convention will be assessed. Also on this basis, it will be possible to decide whether this role and these functions are indeed in keeping with the objective mandate which might be assigned to the secretariat in the new phase of Convention implementation. It is important to make such a clarification to provide the secretariat's activities with overall consistency. However, it must be clearly understood that this is only a starting observation: there is no doubt - and this is the very spirit of the Convention - that pragmatism must prevail and that all the initial ideas may be reassessed as the perceptions of the parties to the Convention evolve.

11. In that spirit, the secretariat proposes to act as follows:

(a) To work, at the request of governments, and in keeping with the strategic focus of the Convention, as a catalyst for the initiatives of the parties, the scientific community, the intergovernmental agencies and the non-governmental organizations involved in restoring agro-ecological balance in the arid, semi-arid, dry semi-humid or degraded areas;

(b) To help to take the necessary steps to strengthen the capabilities for implementation of the Convention at the national level, the regional or subregional level and the global level;

(c) To support the application of the participatory approaches as well as the cooperation machinery in order to allow the maximization of the specific measures designed to combat desertification, the effects of drought and the degradation of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid lands;

(d) To contribute to the creation of an iterative process of follow-up and evaluation of the implementation of the Convention and continuously improve its own efficiency and the relevance of its activities.

B. The first idée-force: "To become a source of reference for the parties to the Convention"

12. The secretariat proposes to provide support to any initiatives that may be taken by the parties to the Convention, individually or collectively, to ensure the effective implementation of the approaches recommended by the Convention. In this context, it should contribute to the emergence of the "identity" of the Convention, meaning, in practice, the empirical delimitation of its sphere of application as well as its own contributions within the institutional and legal context embracing the problems relating to efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought. The secretariat should also help the parties to gain access to the scientific and technical know-how which will enable them to evaluate the threats of desertification, identify the appropriate technical approaches and gauge the impact of the activities undertaken.

13. This is a huge task, and the secretariat can only plan to discharge it by working stage by stage towards a well-identified medium-to-long-term objective. This objective would be to become a source of **reference** and scientific and technical evaluation for the parties to the Convention. This function would evolve progressively through a system of legal advice provided by the secretariat and through activities launched under the auspices of the Committee on Science and Technology set up under the Convention. In practical terms, these services would be provided to the parties to the Convention by means of programmes of studies and recurrent evaluations carried out within the framework of the expertise of specialist institutions identified by the secretariat, and the development of a secretariat-based computerized communication system which would allow direct and targeted access to the desired sources of information. In the long run, this arrangement would evolve into a network of skills which could serve as a centre of excellence in respect of problems relating, in the broad sense, to desertification and the effects of drought.

C. The second idée-force: "To put itself forward as an advocate of awareness creation among actors and public opinion concerning the challenges presented by the need to combat desertification and the effects of drought"

14. The secretariat also proposes to contribute to creating awareness among actors and world public opinion regarding the challenges posed by the need to combat desertification and the effects of drought. In a media environment dominated by the globalization of the free market economy and the related consumerist issues, the problems relating to the long-term risks of environmental degradation remain widely ignored by public opinion. They receive poor coverage from the media, which are disturbed by their alarmist messages. They feature very little among the programmes and priorities of political decision makers. The meagre financial resources allocated to efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought constitute one of the most significant pointers to this marginalization of the "environmental emergency".

15. It is the task of the secretariat, in its role of guarantor of the proper implementation of the Convention, to publicize this text and its implications, to contribute to the dissemination of information on action undertaken and its impact, to continuously assess the environmental risk associated with desertification and the effects of drought. Hence the secretariat should address itself to decision makers in the governmental apparatus as well as civil society and public opinion in general. It must help to introduce the subject matter of the Convention into the fields of politics, the law, education, research, science and ethics. In this way it must become the **"advocate"** of the strategic elements laid down by the Convention. It must become an "awareness creator". In the short term it will therefore be desirable to define the ways and means of enabling it to launch such a process.

D. The third idée-force: "To serve as a driving force for the creation of **synergies** in the context of cooperation at the global, regional and national levels for the implementation of the Convention"

16. Lastly, the secretariat proposes to promote the establishment of a cooperation network which will lead to the formation of a global coalition designed to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. This is a difficult task because of the broadening of the subject areas to the problems of sustainable development and also because of the considerable number of agencies and bodies involved. At the same time, it should be possible to accomplish this task by linking the role and the functions of the secretariat to the existing institutional context, in such a way as not to create new bureaucratic structures.

17. A restructuring of international cooperation in terms of a common objective of promoting sustainable development involves a redistribution of tasks in line with criteria of efficiency and optimization of the allocation of resources. Despite the intentions and the various structures established to attain these objectives, little has been achieved by way of conclusive results. By virtue of its juridical nature, the Convention has certain institutional resources which, in contrast, offer it a certain comparative advantage, especially at the global and regional levels. Because of the operational provisions of the Convention, the bodies set up under it are also competent to participate in the consultations and play an active role in the discussions leading to partnership agreements. Hence the secretariat can look forward to serving as a driving force for the creation of **synergies** in the context of cooperation at the global, regional, subregional and national levels for the implementation of the Convention. The programmes of immediate action must, in this field, define the initially "experimental" approaches which will make it possible to test the machinery and the procedures whereby such synergies can actually be created.

III. SIX PILLARS FOR THE PROPOSED SECRETARIAT PROGRAMME

A. From strategy to programme of action: programme areas articulated around six "pillars"

18. The strategic focus which emerges from the three idées-force of "reference", "advocacy" and "synergy" offer a framework of internal consistency

to the secretariat's programme of action. In order to follow its logic, it is suggested that the various programme areas which will go to make up this programme should be articulated around what have been called "pillars" - which can also be understood as *categories of activity*. In this way these "pillars" constitute the practical underpinnings of the three central ideas of the proposed strategy for action by the secretariat. There are six of them:

(a) First pillar: "Providing core secretariat services";

(b) Second pillar: "Facilitating CCD implementation programming processes";

(c) Third pillar: "Supporting participatory development and involvement of civil society";

(d) Fourth pillar: "Capacity building for national focal points leadership";

(e) Fifth pillar: "Setting up appropriate mechanisms for user driven science and technology";

(f) Sixth pillar: "Facilitating knowledge development and information exchange".

19. The spirit in which the activities relating to each of these "pillars" should be conceived are briefly described below. The following section sets out in detail the activities involved in each of the "programme areas" which are due to make up the secretariat's programme of action during the coming biennium. Not all the proposed activities will necessarily be carried out, as a result of the budgetary, institutional or political constraints which will no doubt be encountered. However, the initial idea is that an immediate programme could serve as a testing ground for checking the relevance and efficiency of the focus and measures proposed. Only after the results of the first part of the programme have been evaluated, at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties, will it be possible to finalize and consolidate the strategies and programmes in the longer term.

B. First pillar: Providing core secretariat services

20. In keeping with articles 8, 9 and 23 of the Convention, inter alia, the action undertaken under this heading will essentially be aimed at providing the Conference of the Parties and the related bodies with the services functionally devolving on the secretariat. Such services include institutional, legal and logistic support required for the smooth operation of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, especially the Committee on Science and Technology. They also include liaison and external relations functions as well as administrative and budgetary functions. Lastly, they relate to the political aspects of coordination. In this regard, and bearing in mind the very broad provisions of the Convention concerning sustainable development, the secretariat would appear to be expected to become a kingpin in a network of interactions with the other Conventions relating to the environment and sustainable development. It is also called on to act, on behalf of the parties to the Convention, as the point of reference for the provisions to be contemplated under the Global Mechanism.

C. Second pillar: Facilitating CCD implementation programming processes

21. In keeping with articles 2, 3, 13, 14 and 22 of the Convention, inter alia, as well as articles 6, 11, 13 and 18 of the regional annex for Africa, articles 5, 6 and 8 of the annex for Asia and article 7 of the annex for Latin America, the action undertaken in this area will be aimed at helping the parties to the Convention to draw up their own programmes of action. The secretariat will act as an intermediary in the processes of consultation so that these programmes can secure the support of international cooperation agencies and partnership agreements. In this area the secretariat will also play the role of a focal point to take stock of action undertaken and evaluate its impact on the implementation of the Convention.

D. Third pillar: Supporting participatory development and involvement of civil society

22. In keeping with articles 3, 9, 10, 13 and 23 of the Convention, inter alia, as well as articles 6, 8 and 9 of the regional annex for Africa and article 9 of the annex for Asia, the action undertaken in this area will, in various forms, provide support to the policies decided on by the parties to the Convention in order to broaden the field of the participatory approaches and to secure ever greater involvement by civil society in the process of sustainable development. Such support constitutes a fundamental commitment by the Convention, which acknowledges the urgent need for the emergence of a "favourable environment" based, inter alia, on these approaches. The secretariat can act in various ways, direct and indirect, to support the application of measures directed towards this end, both at the national and regional and at the local level.

E. Fourth pillar: Capacity building for national focal points leadership

23. In keeping with articles 10, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 26 of the Convention, inter alia, as well as various articles in the regional annexes, the action undertaken in this area will be aimed at strengthening the capacity of the national focal points and other participants involved to guide the process of implementation of the Convention. This action, which will cross-cut other initiatives by the secretariat, will be designed to contribute to the development of the specific expertise of the focal points and the other national participants. It will also make it possible to help them in their work, both through the dissemination of information and through support in the preparation and updating of the national programmes of action and the reports submitted to the Conference of the Parties.

F. Fifth pillar: Setting up appropriate mechanisms for user driven science and technology

24. In keeping with articles 16, 17, 18, 24 and 25 of the Convention, inter alia, the action undertaken in this area will be aimed at facilitating the setting up of appropriate mechanisms for user driven science and technology. This action will involve the establishment of an interactive communication network by means of which the users can be linked to the

scientific and technical bodies with expertise in the field of efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought. A leading role will fall to the Committee on Science and Technology.

G. Sixth pillar: Facilitating knowledge development and information exchange

25. In keeping with articles 16, 19 and 22 of the Convention, inter alia, the action undertaken in this area will be aimed at facilitating the dissemination of knowledge and the exchange of information. The goal will be essentially to prompt collective awareness of the worldwide risks arising from desertification and the effects of drought. This action will be based on diversified communication strategies, which will fit seamlessly in with the approaches already applied by the secretariat. It will be targeted on decision makers in governmental machinery, academic circles, but also civil society and public opinion in general.

IV. OUTLINE OF A PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION

A. Programme areas relating to the provision of core secretariat services

1. Institutional, legal and logistic support provided to the Conference and the Scientific and Technical Committee

26. The provision of institutional and logistic support for the organization of the Conference of the Parties is a fundamental task of the secretariat. However, this task needs to be more clearly defined in order to cover properly all the activities that will prove to be necessary to ensure continuity between sessions. These activities involve, in particular, the preparation of the reports before and after the sessions as well as the activation of a permanent system for monitoring and evaluating the application of the Convention. The secretariat will also have to provide a legal service for all the issues raised by the application of the Convention. In keeping with the resolutions adopted at the first session of the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat also has the task of supporting the operations of the Committee on Science and Technology.

2. Liaison and external relations

27. The application of the Convention and the implementation of the decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties rest very broadly on processes of integration of efforts to combat desertification and the effects of drought as a specific "dimension" of almost all development programmes in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid zones. Such an approach can be envisaged only if it is strongly backed up by effective and lasting processes of coordination. The secretariat seems to be the appropriate body to facilitate, on behalf of the parties to the Convention, the initiatives required for the launching of these processes. Because of the number of agencies and institutions involved, it is proposed to begin by setting up a "nucleus" which would define new arrangements for cooperation. These would take into account the advantages of the existing systems and they would concentrate on "subsidiarities", in other words, needs as yet poorly met or not met at all.

The medium-term objective would be to set up progressively a system for inter-agency coordination on problems related to desertification and the application of the Convention. The secretariat would be the catalyst. The nucleus would comprise the Earth Summit conventions on "sustainable development" (the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)) and the environmental protection conventions. Aside from the various agencies and institutions in the United Nations system, the coordination machinery should embrace the international non-governmental organizations (such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the International NGO Network on Desertification (RIOD)), agencies from the developed countries (bilateral agencies, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), European Union (EU)), regional organizations (regional banks, Organization of African Unity (OAU), Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Organization of American States (OAS)), subregional organizations (such as the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)), national organizations.

28. Apart from these strategic functions, the secretariat would have to ensure normal contacts with the secretariats of the main agencies involved as well as the principal non-governmental organizations. The external relations functions would also comprise the information, communication and consultation services described in other sections of the proposed programme of action. They would also include relations with the secretariat's host country.

3. Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Convention

29. Evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Convention is also one of the secretariat's basic functions. It is the secretariat's task, in its capacity as guarantor of the application of the Convention on behalf of the parties, to collect the data reflecting progress in its implementation and to establish benchmarks and indicators by means of which its impact on the processes of desertification and the effects of drought can be evaluated. In this way the secretariat should be in a position to prepare periodic overviews on the basis of the reports received from the parties to the Convention and to draw up global, regional and national evaluations drawing on scientific data received from the Committee on Science and Technology, inter alia. In that regard, it should give the necessary warning signals in the event of a worsening of the situation. These monitoring and evaluation functions call for strengthening and specialization of the secretariat, and in particular carefully targeted support for the scientific and technical committee.

4. Administrative functions and budgetary management

30. While avoiding becoming a bureaucratic structure, the secretariat should be able to count on at least certain administrative services. There will be a need to handle the organization of the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies, to ensure the necessary liaison between sessions, to promote numerous consultations with the parties, the United Nations agencies, the intergovernmental organizations and the non-governmental organizations. There will also be a need to maintain in operation a multifaceted communication network, inter alia in the framework of the Committee on Science and Technology, to produce information material and

to provide certain direct support to the parties to the Convention, for example in the area of institution-building for management of the Convention. Lastly, there will be a need for the resources required to monitor the application of the Convention and evaluate the impact of the measures taken. These needs now seem to be clearly identified and the time has come to express them in the form of a budget forecast whose priorities and financial levels would be firmly accepted by the parties. The secretariat would propose an "ex post" budget evaluation table which would enable the parties to assess the results achieved at the end of each biennium.

B. Programme areas in respect of facilitating CCD implementation programming processes

1. *Initiatives in respect of consultation among the United Nations agencies involved in environment and sustainable development with a view to common global strategies*

31. The secretariat proposes to promote consultations among the United Nations agencies involved in environment and sustainable development with a view to the formulation of common strategies and harnessing of complementarities in their respective programmes. In that regard, the secretariat would highlight the institutional, legal and political advantages offered by the Convention in respect of integrated participatory processes and in respect of a geographical platform for the implementation of local development programmes. Such an approach would relate in particular to the conventions on climate change and biodiversity as well as the environmental conservation conventions, especially the Ramsar Convention on wetlands.

2. *Ensuring consistency between the strategies for implementing the Convention and the fields of application of the Global Mechanism*

32. In keeping with the spirit of the Convention, the Global Mechanism broadly rests on integration of the programmes to combat desertification and the effects of drought in the various programmes financed under the heading of sustainable development. Its efficiency therefore depends to a large extent on the machinery for coordination and interaction that will be set up to ensure that the programmes specifically related to the Convention are known to the other programmes and linked to them in the light of the acknowledged complementarities. By virtue of its responsibilities vis-à-vis the parties to the Convention where coordination is concerned, the secretariat would seem naturally called on to play the role of a point of reference in programming and technical cooperation in this area. It would thus have the task of proposing procedures for ensuring consistency and maintaining the required contacts with the institutions cooperating with the Global Mechanism - specifically the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the regional banks and the European Union. From these functions of the secretariat would stem a role in the programming of the coordination

meetings organized under the auspices of the Global Mechanism. One of the objectives pursued would be to avoid duplication among the various agencies working to implement the Convention.

3. Specific contributions to facilitate the task of ensuring consistency between national programmes and the approaches recommended in the Convention

33. In partnership with other institutions, the secretariat would have the task of ensuring consistency between the programmes launched at many levels and the approaches and methodologies recommended by the Convention. It would take up this function through institutional back-up expressed essentially in terms of ad hoc support or seminars, workshops and forums organized on the problem area of national programmes of action. The secretariat might also provide specific support by stimulating efforts to tackle issues arising in terms of the legislative and regulatory frameworks or by acting as a promoter of participatory pilot projects for local development.

4. Fostering consultative meetings with a view to the conclusion of partnership agreements at the national level under the auspices of the Global Mechanism

34. The secretariat would be called on to play an active role in organizing and programming consultative meetings relating to the partnership agreements drawn up at the national level in the context of the operation of the Global Mechanism. This function would derive from the role of "interface" which would fall to the secretariat by virtue of the support it will be expected to provide in the preparation of the national programmes of action, and also by virtue of its role in ensuring the consistency of the actions of the Global Mechanism.

5. Specific contributions to help in the preparation of the regional and subregional programmes

35. The secretariat proposes to help in the preparation of the regional or subregional thematic networks in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the northern Mediterranean. This support could take the form of the management of a calendar of meetings, the mobilization of expertise likely to assist in the identification of strategies and priorities, that of assistance in the formulation of specific projects, that of identification of possible partners in financing and technical cooperation, or that of assistance in the monitoring and evaluation of these programmes.

6. Support for interregional initiatives

36. The secretariat would provide support to the interregional initiatives as it has begun to do by organizing the consultative meetings of the Asia-Africa Forum for technical cooperation, the Africa-Latin America and the Caribbean Forum for technical cooperation and the interregional programme to combat desertification in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Eastern Europe. The secretariat could also provide specific assistance in publicizing these initiatives at meetings organized under the auspices of the Global Mechanism and, in a general way, by informing public opinion of their justification and their objectives.

C. Programme areas in respect of supporting participatory development and involvement of civil society

1. Strengthening of cooperation with non-governmental organizations

37. The strengthening of cooperation with non-governmental organizations constitutes one of the principal activities of the secretariat to involve civil society in the implementation of the Convention. However, various factors must be taken into consideration if this cooperation is to be practical in scope. First of all, the secretariat must take into account the systems of consultation and cooperation already set up by other institutions, notably UNDP, the World Bank, IFAD, FAO. As it has no operational role, the secretariat cannot contemplate establishing a new network on its own. The most realistic approach to mobilizing non-governmental organizations would probably be to pass on the message relating to the application of the Convention by making use of the existing networks of selected institutions - such as, for example, RIOD and those of agencies such as FAO or UNDP - with which cooperation agreements would be drawn up.

38. The secretariat will also devise arrangements for working with the non-governmental organizations which will be suited to their respective features. In this way, a role in information and awareness creation would be better suited to international non-governmental organizations of the WWF or IUCN type. Other international non-governmental organizations, of the CARE or OXFAM type, would in contrast be involved in the dissemination of the Convention issues through field activities. Another policy should be defined for the national non-governmental organizations which would be most closely involved in the field activities and in the operations creating awareness among local public opinion. The monitoring system established by the secretariat would include specific monitoring of the actions undertaken by the non-governmental organizations under the Convention. Periodic evaluations would make it possible to select the most effective non-governmental organizations and reorient the cooperation arrangements towards greater efficiency

2. Promotion of methodologies, experiments and grass-roots initiatives aimed at the practical application of the participatory processes and the "local development" approaches

39. Because of the importance the Convention attaches to participatory approaches and local development, the secretariat would have a role to play in identifying and developing appropriate methodologies. It might participate in the monitoring of particularly promising pilot projects. It might directly promote certain innovative projects. It might contribute to methodological seminars, etc. It would be the task of the secretariat to build up methodological experience acquired in order to pass on the benefit to the national focal points and the other agencies involved in local development programmes strongly centred on participatory management of natural resources.

3. Support for initiatives designed to relocate the problem of desertification and the effects of drought in the context of relations between towns and their rural environment

40. The effects of desertification and drought on urbanization as well as the role that can be played in development by new town-countryside dynamics have now been well identified. The secretariat could provide support to initiatives with a potential to influence these dynamics. It might encourage meetings between northern and southern municipalities with a view to identifying fields of action to address the urban and peripheral effects of desertification and drought. An initiative along these lines has already been taken with the support of the city of Rome and IFAD at the time of the convening of the first forum of mayors on desertification during the first Conference of the Parties.

D. Programme areas in respect of capacity building for national focal points

1. Training of national personnel and development of their specific skills

41. The development of the capacity of national personnel to handle the application of the Convention constitutes the major challenge in its implementation and its effective impact on desertification processes. However, this is a difficult undertaking because it must be embarked on in a perspective embracing long-term continuity, a perspective which does not fall in with the customary horizons of funding or technical assistance projects. It is also a difficult undertaking because it can be successful only given a convergence of efforts and an accumulation of the experience acquired. The secretariat can look forward to a realistic policy in this crucial area only by combining its efforts with all those already being pursued by the United Nations agencies - UNDP, UNESCO, UNITAR, FAO, WMO, World Bank, UNEP, Global Environment Facility (GEF) and others such as the regional banks and organizations - and others in the field of the development of the individual and institutional capacities relating to environment and sustainable development.

42. Through various types of linkage with these programmes, but also through specific programmes, the Conference of the Parties could involve its secretariat in the following activities:

(a) Identification, at the national level, of institutional formulas which bolster the leadership and management capacity of the focal points, with research involving not only governmental bodies but also managers in the universities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, community organizations;

(b) Formulation of training strategies and programmes suited to each national situation and aimed essentially at the development of an organizational capability, the ability to formulate projects, network management, the ability to participate in international negotiations, appropriate legal knowledge, understanding of long-term policies, the ability to manage teams and enhance their training;

(c) Mobilization of financial resources to support the implementation of these training strategies;

(d) Development of an information system capable of responding to the needs of national personnel.

43. Such personnel-targeted activities would necessarily be supplemented by other training activities designed to create a favourable environment. This would include the integration of desertification issues in educational curricula and strategies for communication with national public opinion.

2. Support to the national focal points in preparing national reports and documents

44. The secretariat would plan, as its resources permit or through mobilization of resources from the associated institutions, to supply expertise capable of helping the focal points and other national personnel to prepare the national programmes of action and other documents in coordination with the other sustainable development conventions.

E. Programme areas in relation to scientific and technological services

1. Establishment of support for the Committee on Science and Technology

45. Under the resolutions adopted by the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat must provide the following services to the Committee on Science and Technology (CST): organizing the periodic meetings of CST as well as the ad hoc meetings; taking the necessary steps to carry out the studies requested by CST; supervising the work of CST between sessions; establishing and maintaining a register of independent experts who specialize in the fields covered by the Convention; helping CST to establish the network of links with the international scientific community. In the medium term, CST is expected to become a recognized body for scientific and technical advice, a pole of reference for research relating to the fields covered by the Convention, and a centre for data-gathering and selection of scientific and technical information.

2. Establishment of a network embracing the scientific institutions concerned

46. The secretariat, in supporting CST, is called on to pursue the efforts it has already begun to build a network embracing the scientific institutions and technology centres dealing with desertification and the effects of drought. However, it is difficult to envisage such a network being constructed entirely independently, as the task would exceed the secretariat's abilities. The strategy proposed would be that of insertion into existing scientific networks and the creation of links, especially in the computer field, to be able to channel requests in the light of the scientific and technical issues relating to desertification and the effects of drought in arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid lands. Such a network between networks might begin with an arrangement with UNEP, which has already carried out an initial exercise to identify the competent bodies in the field of the environment. It

would be for the secretariat's core scientific group to inventory the issues which best responded to the needs and to devise a research programme which is user-friendly and accessible to the majority of users.

3. *Establishment and activation of a core scientific group within the secretariat*

47. The secretariat proposes to set up at its headquarters a multidisciplinary core scientific group whose role would be essentially to assist the secretariat to discharge the functions falling to it in servicing the Committee on Science and Technology.

4. *Contribution to the development of knowledge in specific areas of study and support for the thematic research programmes undertaken at the regional or subregional level*

48. The Committee on Science and Technology, with the support of the secretariat, would contribute to the development of knowledge in areas relating to the problems of desertification and the effects of drought, on the pattern of the initial work requested by the Conference of the Parties on traditional knowledge relating to desertification or on the indicators for monitoring the impact of desertification and the effects of drought. CST would also address the topics pursued and followed up as a part of the efforts being made by the parties to the Convention at the regional level.

49. Specific studies undertaken in a joint study programme involving other interested institutions might relate to topics such as: "desertification, migrations, urbanization", "global impact of desertification on regional societies", "mountain ecosystems and means of combating desertification", "possible role of the private sector in restoring degraded arid lands", "geostrategic and security aspects of desertification and the effects of drought", "geographical information systems and strengthening of the hazard warning capacity", "effects of the El Niño phenomenon on degradation of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid lands", "record of successful experiments in participatory development applied to environmental rehabilitation", "impact of desertification and the effects of drought on health", "alternative farming practices to combat soil degradation", etc. Support would also be provided to the thematic research programmes undertaken at the regional or subregional level.

F. Programme areas in relation to dissemination of information and exchange of information

1. *Creation of awareness among actors and public opinion in general*

50. Creation of awareness among actors and public opinion in general is fundamental in creating a favourable climate for the Convention. The public, in the broad sense, must be informed of the risks posed by desertification and the effects of drought and by land degradation. It must also be persuaded that it has a role to play by contributing to currents of opinion and taking initiatives in support. The creation of this awareness involves a public information policy which is consistent and multifaceted. Such a policy could be based on the production of information material aimed at the broad public, the dissemination of educational material for use by teachers, press campaigns

and a presence in the media, the promotion of media events, etc. The secretariat could plan the creation of a press office whose role would be to coordinate and stimulate the concerted implementation of this strategy. A pilot project covering certain African countries could be envisaged to test the proposed approaches.

2. Production of information material

51. The secretariat would continue the efforts already undertaken to produce information material. It would include in particular a quarterly newsletter, press releases, publications on evaluations and studies carried out by the secretariat, programmes for radio and television, miscellaneous information tools for the mass public (kits for popularizing information about desertification and the Convention, posters, etc.), documents intended for teachers, etc. Producing this material would seem to be difficult, however, without outside contributions. These could be sought from national bodies and through sponsorship by the private sector.

3. Establishment of a "reference centre"

52. The secretariat plans to set up a reference centre which can easily be accessed by users. This centre would include an internal library, with the possibility of consulting documentary references over the Internet. It would also include a computerized system for access to the main data banks dealing with the issues covered by the Convention. The centre would direct users to the appropriate sources of information. It should be noted that the secretariat has become a recipient of information and that it is therefore acquiring a reference collection of general interest.

4. Establishment of a global information and communication system

53. The secretariat has embarked on setting up an information and communication system based on Internet technologies. Electronic networks have been developed, in particular for Latin America and the Caribbean. It might be expanded by devising specific programs to help national focal points and other participants involved to acquire appropriate equipment and training in its use. The information "products" offered to the parties to the Convention might include specific data banks dealing with the activities of the secretariat, the Conference of the Parties and the Committee for Science and Technology, interactive information systems on regional activities to implement the Convention (electronic regional forums, country information networks, etc.), networking of the institutions and agencies expected to cooperate under the Convention's regional programmes of action, around issues targeted on desertification.

V. CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION AND ROLE OF THE SECRETARIAT

54. The implementation of the programme of action proposed by the secretariat involves the setting of priorities and the mobilization of budgetary resources which must be taken into consideration by the Conference of the Parties. The parties to the Convention are invited to consider them

and adopt their decisions on the role the secretariat may play by realistically gauging the risks involved in the implementation of the Convention and, at the same time, the opportunities it may offer.

A. The risks involved in the implementation of the Convention

55. There are many risks. The first is the risk that the Convention will evolve in the form of what one might term "virtual reality". This risk is unfortunately frequently encountered in processes of international cooperation: a programme, a development strategy, an international convention often tend to exist only through conferences, meetings and mechanisms which are set up to deal with them. The only tangible results among the populations concerned are proposed measures and the establishment of committees, but very little change in the substance. Another risk is that of interminable chains of intermediaries dealing with preparatory measures and the formulation of programmes of practical action. A third risk is that of bureaucratization of the processes, with administrative management substituted for real programmes. A further risk is that of disaffection on the part of civil society, a lack of interest and an absence of support from public opinion. A last, equally serious risk involves the reluctance of multilateral and bilateral agencies to engage in genuine participation in cooperation machinery and in the search for synergies and complementarities required by the situations encountered.

56. The Convention offers a framework for action which is based on processes of consultation, the preparation of programmes of action, cooperation machinery, the support of civil society. Its implementation therefore involves all the risks that have been mentioned. The strategy proposed for action by the secretariat is based, around certain idées-force, on supports - the "six pillars" whose purpose is precisely to address these risks. Strengthening the action by the secretariat in this direction and firm decisions for action to meet the challenges are therefore in the clear interest of the parties to the Convention. By giving the secretariat an appropriate mandate, with reference to a clear long-term strategy, the parties can make it into a "dynamic core", a flexible structure for catalysing action, a means of activating processes. Such a task for the secretariat would thus have an innovative character which would make it the very opposite of a new bureaucracy. It would become instead the instrument of the innovations of the Convention which would be evaluated periodically by the Conference of the Parties.

B. The opportunities offered by the political and institutional choices adopted in the Convention

57. The Convention to Combat Desertification and the effects of drought is based on choices which make it an unprecedented tool for action among the machinery set up to support sustainable development. For the first time, institutional provisions commit States to address the problems posed by ecological degradation of extreme gravity, by defining a framework for action which is multifaceted and firmly linked to political choices in favour of sustainable development. The choice of a holistic approach, in other words one embracing all ecological, economic and social interactions, is thus at the root of all the approaches proposed. The "integrated" approaches, in which the ecological rehabilitation activities fall, stem from this first choice. At the same time, the Convention recognizes the fundamental principle of

responsible participation by grass-roots actors in the processes of implementation. Linked with this choice is the concept of partnership, which provides new foundations for the relations between peoples and governments. The Convention also places the approaches it recommends in the context of decentralization. In this way it relocates the many activities undertaken by the grass-roots communities in the political framework of local development at the microregional level. Hence it covers the interactions which exist between the development of rural areas and urban development. Lastly, the Convention projects its specific action in a process of synergy and inter-agency cooperation.

58. These choices make the Convention a kind of very broad basket to which many other programmes of action can be attached. In such a context, the secretariat would have a fundamental role to play to draw on these comparative advantages and ensure that other institutions benefit from them. This place falling to the secretariat in the scheme of international cooperation could also make a substantial contribution to the establishment of more solid and more effective cooperation machinery than in the past. Here too, the secretariat could be a centre providing stimulus and activation.

C. Final consideration: the need for long-term perspective

59. The decisions concerning the secretariat essentially concern its medium-term strategy and its programme of action for the next biennium. This horizon must not in any way lead to neglect of the long-term perspectives encompassed by the Convention. In parallel to the establishment of the instruments for the implementation of the Convention, the degradation of arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid lands is proceeding at a rapid rate: the longer we wait, the more catastrophic the processes become. The Convention's institutional provisions undoubtedly mark an advance, but they will be inadequate if they are not accompanied by the growth of widespread awareness and the mobilization of public opinion for genuine worldwide awareness. The institutional obligations - conference, studies, programming, concerted action - must not conceal the demanding dimension of the global problem as well as all the activities which have yet to be fostered to give the Convention a chance of success.

60. It is now well known that natural resources can be rehabilitated and better managed only through sustainable development which can tackle the roots of the problem of poverty. But such claims are not enough if they are limited to statements on participatory methods, coordination of assistance or the activation of synergies. We must, with realism, take the measure of all the other risks, be willing to see their essence and ask ourselves what the international community could do to prevent or mitigate their effects.

61. The rehabilitation of natural resources is also a problem of the distribution of these resources. Today social and geographical inequalities create all the conditions for eco-conflicts, large-scale population migrations which no environmental convention can halt. What international machinery is being conceived to prevent them from occurring? The rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems is also to a large extent a matter of collective solidarity and moderation in the sustainable use of natural resources. Certain extreme forms of competition brought about by excessively brutal liberalization run counter to such discipline. What is it planned to do to

reduce the excesses, prevent regressive environmental trends they cause and introduce better functioning of the global economy? Safeguarding the environment, success in combating desertification and the effects of drought also involve becoming aware of our joint responsibility: we have only one Earth, and each irresponsible act, committed here or there, has implications which concern us all. Henceforth, the laws of nature apply to the political level: in ecological matters, sovereignty becomes worldwide by necessity. In the long run it will be necessary to consider steps to punish the destruction of the environment or to better judge attacks on the equilibria of the biosphere. Consideration of the legal aspects of the international protection of the environment will no doubt continue in the coming years.

62. It is enough to imagine the world in 20 or 30 years to become convinced of the need to think about the responses that can be supplied to these questions. Such questions offer a very special challenge to the advocates of the Convention because they stand in the mainstream of the thinking which led to the first conventions relating to ecological risks. The dynamics of environmental degradation as well as the resulting risks now impose a need for continuity in action. We might consider the establishment of a working group to reflect on this matter. At all events, it is the hope of the secretariat that this paper will permit fruitful exchanges on the implementation of the Convention and will foster closer cooperation among the institutions concerned.